

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

DIGITAL MUST CARRY

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of

Carriage of the Transmissions
of Digital Television Broadcast Stations

Amendments to Part 76
of the Commission's Rules

)
)
)
)
)
)
)

CS Docket No. 98-120

RECEIVED
OCT 13 1998
FCC MAIL ROOM

COMMENTS OF

Paula Wilson

USA

Date: October 9th, 1998

I file these comments on October 9th 1998, in the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the Carriage of the Transmissions of Digital Television Broadcast Stations adopted July 9, 1998, CS Docket No. 98-120.

(It is often best to start with a summary of your comments, then follow with the details, explanations and other material as needed. This can be more than one page. Be sure your name and the docket number you are referring to appear on each page.)

Submitted by:



Paula Wilson

USA

Date: October 9th, 1998

No. of Copies rec'd
List A B C D E

024

Paula Wilson
CS Docket No. 98-120

DIGITAL MUST CARRY COMMENTS TO FCC

I am opposed to any ruling which would have the Digital Must Carry rule go into effect. I am opposed to this because a "must carry" rule would significantly undermine the way that I consume cable television. I find disconcerting the fact that Digital Must Carry would most surely force out of the airways non-profit\educational channels such as C-SPAN to make way for the dollar driven networks, such as home shopping and pay for view. I am frustrated by the fact that consumers would have no say about the forcing out of C-SPAN or the programs they may wish to view. Moreover, this allows networks driven by money, and not quality of content, to produce less than educational programming. Inane programming is scary, I prefer not to move in that direction.

The harms I would suffer if the D.C. rule were to go through would occur on both a personal and professional level. To begin, the D.C. would limit my opportunity as a consumer of world events. I depend on C-SPAN programming to receive news. C-SPAN is the only network which brings unmodified world and national political events directly to me. I enjoy a great deal listening to the President, supreme court justices, politicians, and social activists' speeches without the drawback of a news anchor's commentary. The networks which are profit oriented necessarily present the news in modified and biased formats. The camera angle, the time of day (as opposed to live),

Paula Wilson
CS Docket No. 98-120

whether or not they cover the entire event, or only part of it, all constitute a bias on the part of the station. I don't want my news filtered that way. C-SPAN is the only way for me to witness an entire political or social event as though I were in the same room. I do not want to be at the mercy of any profit network who is going to maximize the drama and theatrics of any particular occasion, as opposed to simply bringing the event to me so that I can form my own opinion about such an event. The Presidential Impeachment hearings, for example, can either be consumed with a journalist offering his/her spin on what each Senator says every station break, or in its entirety with the entire picture available, with all the verbiage intact. I prefer the latter.

I depend on C-SPAN for "pure" news and events. D.C. is not worth losing that resource.

The inimical consequences of replacing C-SPAN with blank spaces (because one may choose to own a conventional television set) is an outrage. A \$7,000.00 investment in a new digital television set is not a possibility for me. I am a single mother raising two children on my own salary. I suspect this is true for many Americans.

I appreciate the kind of educational-based programming C-SPAN makes available to my children and me. As I attempt to make my children aware of world events, I use C-SPAN programming as a basis for our political discussions around the dinner table. I choose which part of the President's

Paula Wilson
CS Docket No. 98-120

testimony the children will watch, if any at all. I choose the tone of our conversation, not Dan Rather. My children are able to put names with faces when we watch C-SPAN, the camera does not discriminate who shall be shown. C-SPAN's House and Senate coverage shows those who are actually present. This in and of itself is instructive. I currently enjoy the fact that my children are able to arrive at their own conclusions. Their news is not spoon fed to them. Consequently I believe that they will grow up to be savvy consumers of political news and enthusiastic contributors to our political system as educated voters, if nothing else.

The second significant harm posed by D.C. effects me on a professional level. I am a college professor. I regularly assign my students to view any number of C-SPAN programs in order to supplement what we discuss in class. The Presidential Impeachment hearings and the House and Senate commentary on this matter offers a viable example of First Amendment rights issues for my students of Persuasion to study. My classes in Rhetorical Criticism examine all kinds of rhetoric surrounding impeachment discussions in order to analyze such rhetoric, look for any historical president, and appreciate the historical significance of the entire ordeal. Where else, save the *Congressional Record* (which is not an accurate document of what is actually said in the House and the Senate), would my students be able to consume that rhetoric first hand? Where else would students in my Argument class have the opportunity to hear arguments in their

Paula Wilson
CS Docket No. 98-120

entirety and original form in favor and against the President's impeachment? There is no other place for my students to consume these arguments in their original and pure forms.

Finally, "must carry" is not in the general public's best interest. Eventually my children and my students will become political and social contributors and consumers. Their unobstructed access to the information C-SPAN programming provides is essential to their interests as consumers. Although studies on the subject have not been formally conducted to my knowledge, students who moved through my courses and were required to glean some of their information from C-SPAN have reported back to me that the programming has helped them to become better consumers of public messages.

I believe that the "must carry" dilemma should be resolved in the free market. This is the only way for the public to truly choose what is in their best interests. The C-SPAN network is still young, let us preserve access to it and continue to reap as a benefit a more savvy and involved public.